## THE LONE STAR RANGER

A Thrilling Texas Border Story By ZANE GREY

SYNOPSIS.

The time of the story: about 1875 The place: The Texas cow country. The chief character: Buckley Duane, a young man who has inherited a lust to kill, which he suppresses. In self-defense he shoots dead a drunken bully and is forced to fice to the wild country where he joins Bland's outlaw band. Euchre, an amisble rascal, tells him about Jennie, a young girl who had been abducted and sold to Bland for a bad fats. They determine to rescue the girl and restore her to civilization. Euchre has just reconnoitered, and is reporting the outlook to Buck. Euchre is killed. Buck kills Bland and is dangerously wounded by Mrs. Bland, but escapes with Jennie. Jennie is abducted. Buck never sees her again, but kills her abductor. Duane barely escapes death at the hands of lynchers for a crime he never committed. He goes to see Captain MacNelly of the Rangers, who hands him a pardon on condition that he join the Rangers and assist in breaking up the outlaws. Duane accepts and goes to the outlaws businesses in breaking up the outlaws headquarters on a secret mission. He meets Colonel Longstreth, mayor of Fairdale, an i Miss Ray Longstreth and her cousin, Ruth. There is something suspicious about Longstreth.

## CHAPTER XVII-Continued.

Miss Longstreth rose white as her dress. The young women present stared in astonishment, if they were cowboys present who suddenly grew intent and still. By these things ing. He were no hat or coat, His big gunsheath showed plainly at his

Sight of Miss Longstreth had an unaccountable effect upon Duane. He was plunged into confusion. For the moment he saw no one but her.

"Miss Longstreth - I came - to mearch-your house," panted Duane. "Search my house!" exclaimed Miss

Longstreth; and red succeeded the white in her cheeks. She appeared astonished and angry. "What for? Why, how dare you! This is unwarrantable!"

"A man-Bo Snecker-assaulted and robbed Jim Laramie," replied Duane, hurriedly, "I chased Snecker here-saw him run into this house."

"Here? Oh, sir, you must be mistaken. We have seen no one. In the absence of my father I'm mistress here. I'll not permit you to search." Lawson appeared to come out of his astonishment. He stepped forward.

"Ray, don't be bothered now," he said, to his cousin. "This fellow's making a bluff. I'll settle him. See bere, mister, you clear out!"

"I want Snecker. He's here, and I'm going to get him," replied Duane, auletly.

"Bah! That's all a bluff," sneered Lawson. "I'm on to your game. You just wanted an excuse to break in here-to see my cousin again. When you saw the company you invented that excuse. Now, be off, or it 'll be the worse for you."

Duane felt his face burn with a that he was guilty of such motive. Had he not been unable to put this Ray Longstreth out of his mind? There seemed to be scorn in her eyes now. And somehow that checked his embarrassment.

"Miss Longstreth, will you let me search the house?" he asked.

"Then-I regret to say-I'll do so without your permission." "You'll not dare!" she flashed. She

stood erect, her bosom swelling. "Pardon me—yes, I will." "Who are you?" she demanded, sud-

"I'm a Texas Ranger," replied Duane.

"A Texas Ranger!" she echoed. Floyd Lawson's dark face turned

"Miss Longstreth, I don't need warrants to search houses," said Duane. "I'm sorry to annoy you. I'd prefer to have your permission. A ruffian has taken refuge here-in your father's house. He's hidden somewhere. May I look for him?"

"If you are indeed a ranger." Duane produced his papers, Miss Longstreth haughtily refused to look at them.

"Miss Longstreth, I've come to make Fairdale a safer, cleaner, better slace for women and children. I don't wonder at your resentment. But to Soubt me-insult me. Some day you may be sorry."

Floyd Lawson made a violent moson with his hands.

"All stuff! Cousin, go on with your party. I'll take a couple of cowboys and go with this-this Texas Ranger,"

"Thanks," said Duane coolly, as he syed Lawson. "Perhaps you'll be able in find Snecker quicker than I could." "What do you mean?" demanded Lawson, and now he grew livid. Evisently he was a man of quick pas-

"Don't quarrel," said Miss Long-"Floyd you go with him.

Please hurry. I'll be nervous tillthe man's found or you're sure there's

merch the house. It struck Duane more than forcibly that Lawson tried lance, his air of finality, his authoritto keep in the lead. It was Duane who ative assurance—these to Duane's peered into a dark corner and then,

with a gun leveled, said "Come out!" He came forth into the flare-a tall, dim, dark-faced youth, wearing somarero, blouse and trousers. Duane collared him before any of the others could move and held the gun close enough to make him shrink. pecied into Duane's face, then into

into Lawson's and if ever in Duane's bullet. life he beheld relief it was then. That was all Duane needed to know, but Laramie," said Duane, his voice still he meant to find out more if he could. ringing. "What has the court to say "Who 're you?" asked Duane, quiet- to that?"

"Bo Snecker," he said.

"Ranger, what 'll you do with him?" Lawson queried, as if uncertain, now the capture was made.

"I'll see to that," replied Dunne, and he pushed Snecker in front of him out into the court.

Dunne had suddenly conceived the lden of taking Snecker before Mayor Longstreth in the court.

When Duane arrived at the hall

where court was held there were sat at a table on a platform. Near Owens, county judge. To the right stood a tall, angular, yellow-faced and a warning glare. fellow with a drooping sandy musnot equally perturbed. There were tache, Conspicuous on his vest was a huge silver shield. This was Gorsech, one of Longstreth's sheriffs. Duane gathered that his appearance There were four other men whom must be disconcerting. He was pant- Duane knew by sight, several faces were familiar, and half a dozen strangers, all dusty horsemen.

Longstreth pounded hard on the table to be heard. Mayor or not, he was unable at once to quell the excitement. Gradually, however, it subsided, and from the last few utterances before quiet was restored Duane gathered that he had intruded upon some kind of a meeting in the

"What 'd you break in here for," demanded Longstreth.

"Isn't this the court? Aren't you Duane, His voice was clear and loud, almost piercing.

"Yes," replied Longstreth. Like flint he seemed, yet Duane felt his intense interest. "I've arrested a criminal," said

"Arrested a criminal!" ejaculated

Longstreth. "You? Who are you?" "I'm a ranger," replied Duane. A significant silence ensued. "I charge Snecker with assault on

Laramie and attempted robbery-if keeps a record."

"What's this I hear about you, Bo? Get up and speak for yourself," said Longstreth, gruffly.

Snecker got up, not without a furtive glance at Duane, and he had shuffled forward a few steps toward not the boldness even of a rustler.

"It ain't so, Longstreth," he began, loudly. "I went in Laramie's place ade of hot blood. Almost he felt fer grub. Some feller I never seen before come in from the hall an' hit Laramie an' wrastled him on the floor. I went out, Then this big ranger chased me an' fetched me here. I didn't do nothin'. This ranger's hankerin' to arrest somebody. Thet's my hunch, Longstreth."

> Longstreth said something in an undertone to Judge Owens, and that worthy nodded his great bushy head. "Bo, you're discharged," said Longstreth, bluntly. "Now the rest of you clear out of here."

> He absolutely ignored the ranger. That was his rebuff to Duane-his slap in the face to an interfering ranger service. If Longstreth was



"That's a Lie, Longstreth."

crooked he certainly had magnificent They started with several cowboys to nerve. Duane almost decided he was above suspicion. But his nonchakeen and practised eyes were in significant contrast to a certain tenseness of line about the mouth and a

slow paling of his olive skin. Then the prisoner, Snecker, with a cough that broke the spell of silence, shuffled a couple of steps toward the

"Hold on!" called Duane. The call

that of the cowpoy agar to him, then | halted Snecker, as if it had been a

"Longstreth, I saw Snecker attack

"The court has this to say. West of the Pecos we'll not aid any ranger service. We don't want you out here. Fairdale doesn't need you."

"That's a lie, Longstreth," retorted Duane. "I've letters from Fairdale citizens all begging for ranger serv-

Longstreth turned white. The veins corded at his temples. He appeared about to burst into rage. He was at a loss for quick reply.

Floyd Lawson rushed in and up to other men there, a dozen or more, and the table. The blood showed black all seemed excited; evidently, news of and thick in his face; his utterance Duane had preceded him. Longstreth was incoherent, his uncontrollable outbreak of temper seemed out of all him sat a thick-set grizzled man, with proportion to any cause he should deep eyes, and this was Hanford reasonably have had for anger. Longstreth shoved him back with a curse

"Where's your warrant to arrest Snecker?" shouted Longstreth. "I don't need warrants to make

arrests. Longstreth, you're ignorant of the power of Texas Rangers."

"You'll come none of your damned ranger stunts out here. I'll block you?

That passionate reply of Longstreth's was the signal Duane had been waiting for. He had helped on the crisis. He wanted to force Longstreth's hand and show the town his

Duane backed clear of everybody. "Men! I call on you all!" cried Duane, piercingly. "I call on you to witness the arrest of a criminal prevented by Longstreth, mayor of Fairdale. It will be recorded in the rethe mayor of Fairdale?" interrogated port to the Adjutant-General at Austin. Longstreth, you'll never prevent another arrest."

Longstreth sat white with working

"Longstreth," said Duane, in a voice that carried far and held those who heard. "Any honest citizen of Fairdale can now see what's plain. In the two years you've been mayor you've never arrested one rustler. Strange, when Fairdale's a nest for rustlers! You've never sent a prisoner to Del Rio, let alone to Austin. not murder. He's had a shady past You have no jail. There have been here, as this court will know if it nine murders during your officeinnumerable street-fights and hold-ups. Not one arrest! There have been lawsuits in your court-suits over waterrights, cattle deals, property lines. Strange how in these lawsuits you or Lawson or other men close to you were always involved! Strange how the mayor. He had an evil front, but It seems the law was stretched to favor your interest!"

Duane paused in his cold, ringing speech. In the silence, both outside and inside the hall, could be heard the deep breathing of agitated men. Longstreth was indeed a study. Yet did he betray anything but rage at this interloper.

"Longstreth, here's plain talk for you and Fairdale," went on Duane. "I don't accuse you and your court of dishonesty. I say strange! Law here has been a farce. The motive behind all this laxity isn't plain to me yet. But I call your hand!"

## CHAPTER XVIII.

Duane left the hall, elbowed his way through the crowd, and went down the street. He was certain that on the faces of some men he had seen ill-concealed wonder and satisfaction. He had struck some kind of a hot trail, and he meant to see where it led. It was by no means unlikely that Cheseldine might be at the other end. Duane controlled a mounting engerness. But ever and anon it was shot through with a remembrance of Ray Longstreth. He suspected her father of being not what he pretended. He was troubled.

Upon returning to the inn he found Laramie there, apparently none the worse for his injury.

"How are you, Laramie?" he asked. "That was a good crack Snecker gave

"I ain't accusin' Bo," remonstrated Laramie, with eyes that made Duane thoughtful.

"Well, I accuse him. I caught him -took him to Longstreth's court. But they let him go."

Laramie appeared to be agitated by this intimation of friendship.

"See here, Laramie," went Duane, "in some parts of Texas it's policy to be close-mouthed. Policy and health-preserving! Between ourselves, I want you to know I lean on your side of the fence."

Laramie gave a quick start. Presently Duane turned and frankly met his gaze. He had startled Laramie out of his habitual set tacituralty; but even as he looked the light that might have been amaze and joy faded out of his face, leaving it the same old mask. Still Duane had seen enough. Like a bloodhound he had

"Talling about work, Laramie, who'd you say Snecker worked for?" "When he works at all, which sure ain't often, he rides for Longstreth." "Humph!" Seems to me that Longstreth's the whole circus round Fair- rung true to me." dale. I was surprised to hear some one say Longstreth owned the Hope

hereabouts," replied Laramle, constrainedly.

"Humph again! Laramie, like every other fellow I met in this town, you're afraid to open your trap about Longstreth, Get me straight, Laramie. For cause I'd throw a gun on him just as quick as on any rustler

"Talk's cheap," replied Laramie, making light of his bluster, but the red was deepe: in his face.

"Eure. I know that," Duane said. "And usually I don't talk. Then it's not well known that Longstreth owns the Hope So?" "Reckon it's known in Pecos, all

right. But Longstreth's name isn't handle Smith, Blossom Kane, and connected with the Hope So. Blandy runs the place." "That Blandy. His fare game's

crooked, or I'm a locoed bronch. That Hope So place ought to be run by a good fellow like you, Laramie." "Thanks," replied he; and Duane

imagined his voice a little husky. "Didn't you hear I used to-run it? I built the place, owned it for eleven years.'

"Well, I'll be doggoned." It was indeed Duane's turn to be surprised. and with the surprise came a glimmering. "I'm sorry you're not there now. Did you sell out?"

"No. Just lost the place." Laramie was bursting for relief now-to talk, to tell. Sympathy had made him soft. "It was two years ago-two years last March," he went on. "I was in a big cattle deal with Longstreth. We got the stock-an' my share, eighteen hundred head, was rustled off. I owed Longstreth He pressed me. It came to a lawsuit-an' I-was ruined."

It hurt Dunne to look at Laramle. He was white, and tears rolled down his cheeks. Duane saw the bitterness. the defeat, the agony of the man. But the reason he did not openly accuse Longstreth, the secret of his reticence and fear—these Duane thought best to try to learn at some later time.

"Hard luck! It certainly was tough," Duane said. "But you're a good loser. And the wheel turns! Now, Laramie, here's what. I need your advice. I've got a little money. But before I lose it I want to invest some. Buy some stock, or buy an interest in some rancher's herd. Sure you must know a couple of men above suspicion."

"Thank God I do," he replied, feelingly. "Frank Morton an' Si Zimmer, my friends an' neighbors all my prosperous days, an' friends still. You can gamble on Frank an' Sl. But if you want advice from medon't invest money in stock now."

"Because any new feller buyin' stock these days will be rustled quicker 'n he can say Jack Robinson. The old ranchers are wise an' They'd fight if they-"

"What?" Duane put in as he paused. "What 'd make them fight?" "A leader!"

"Howdy thar, Jim" boomed a big

A man of great bulk, with a ruddy, erry race, entered "Hello, Morton," replied Laramie.

but I don't know his name." "Haw! Haw! Tuet's all right, Few

men out hyar go by their right "Say, Morton," put in Duane, "Laramle gave me a hunch you'd be a good man to tie to. Now, I've a little money and before I lose it I'd like to

invest it in stock." Morton smiled broadly. "I'm on the square," Duane said, bluntly. "If you fellows never size up your neighbors any better than you have sized me-well, you won't get

any richer." It was enjoyment for Duane to make his remarks to these men pregnant with meaning. Morton French extraction; a man, evidently, showed his pleasure, his interest, but his faith held aloof.

"Wal, stranger, to come out flatfooted, you'd be foolish to buy cattle now. Better go back across the Pecos where the rustlers ain't so strong." "All I hear is rustlers, Morton," replied Duane, with impatience. "You see, I haven't ever lived long in a rustler-run county. Who heads the gang, anyway?"

Morton looked at Duane with a curiously amused smile, then snapped his big jaw as if to shut in impulsive words.

"Look here, Morton. It stands to reason, no matter how strong these rustlers are, how hidden their work, however involved with supposedly honest men-they can't last. There are a lot of men around Fairdale who 're afraid of their shadows-afraid to be out after dark-afraid to open erner! Why, you're only a four-flushtheir mouths. But you're not one, What you need out here is some new blood. Savvy what I mean?"

"Wal, I reckon I do," he replied, looking as if a storm had blown over him. "Stranger, I'll look you up the next time I come to town." Then he went out.

fire. He breathed a deep breath and looked around the room before his gaze fixed again on Duane.

"Wal," he replied, speaking low.

You've picked the right men. Now, who in the hell are you?" Reaching into the inside pocket of his buckskin vest, Dunne turned the lining out. A star-shaped bright silver

and all, under Jim's hard eyes. "Ranger!" he whispered, cracking the table with his fist. "You sure

"Laramie, do you know who's boss of this secret gang of rustlers here,"

sharp to the point. His voice-something deep, easy, cool about himseemed to steady Laramie,

"No," replied Laramte. "Does anybody know?" went on

Dunne. "Wal, I reckon there's not one hon-

est native who knows," "But you have suspicions?"

"We have," "Have you any idea whether Cheseldine and his gang are associated with

this gang here?" "Lord knows. I've always suspected them bein' the same gang. None of us ever seen Cheseldine-an' thet's strange when Knell, Poggin, Pan-Fletcher, they all ride here often. No. Poggin doesn't come here often. But the others do. Fer thet matter, they're around all over west of the Pecos.

"Now I'm puzzled over this," said Duane. "Why do men-apparently honest men-seem to be so closemouthed here? Is that a fact, or only

my impression?" "It's sure a fact," replied Laramie, darkly. "Men have lost cattle an' property in Fairdale-lost them honestly or otherwise, as hasn't been proved. An' in some cases when they talked-hinted a little-they was



Lawson Staggered Backward.

found dead. Apparently held up an' robbed. But dead. Dead men don't Thet's why we're closemouthed."

The ranger was about to speak again when the clatter of hoofs interrupted him. Horses halted out in front, and one rider got down. Floyd Lawson entered. He called for tobacco.

If his visit surprised Laramie he did not show any evidence. But Lawson showed rage as he saw the ranger, and then a dark glint flitted from the eyes that shifted from Duane to "I'd introduce you to my guest here, | Laramie and back again. Duane leaned easily against the counter.

"Say, that was a bad break of yours." Lawson said. "If you come fooling around the ranch again there'll be hell."

It seemed strange that a man who had lived west of the Pecos for ten years could not see in Dunne something which forbade that kind of talk. It certainly was not nerve Lawson showed; men of courage were seldom intolerant. With the matchless nerve that characterized the great gunmen of the day there was a cool, unobtrusive manner, a speech brief, almost gentle, certainly courteous. Lawson was a hot-headed Louisianian of who had never been crossed in any thing, and who was strong, brutal, passionate, which qualities in the face of a situation like this made him simply a fool.

"You're right. But not the kind you think," Duane retorted, his voice

sharp and cold. "Ray Longstreth wouldn't stoop to know a dirty blood-tracker like you," said Lawson hotly. He did not seem to have a deliberate intention to rouse Duane; the man was simply rancorous, jealous. "I'll call you right. You cheap bluffer! You four-flush! You damned interfering, conceited ranger!"

"Lawson, I'll not take offense, because you seem to be championing your beautiful cousin," replied Duane, in slow speech. "But let me return your compliment. You're a fine Southa cheap bull-headed rustler!"

Duane hissed the last word. Then for him there was the truth in Lawson's working passion-blackened face. Lawson jerked, moved, meant to draw, But how slow! Duane lunged forward. His long arm swept up. And Lawson staggered backward, Laramie had eyes like flint striking knocking table and chairs, to fall them. Do not worry, Floyd. Tell hard, in a half-sitting posture against

the wall. "Don't draw!" warned Duane. "Lawson, git away from your gun!" elled Laramie.

But Lawson was crazed with fury. He tugged at his hip, his face corded with purple welts, malignant, murderous. Duane kicked the gun out of object flashed as he shoved it, pocket his hand. Lawson got up, raging, and has dropped poison, and it 'li spread.\* rushed out.

Laramie lifted his shaking hands. "What 'd you wing him for?" he wailed. . "He was drawin' on you. Kickin' men like him won't do out

abouts?" asked Duane, bluntly. It ! "That buil-headed fool will roar and am?"-Indianapolis Star

"He owns considerable property was characteristic of him to come butt himself with all his gang right into our hands. He's just the mar

I've needed to meet." "If Lawson's the man you think he is he'll begin that secret underground business. Why, Lawson won't sleep of nights now. He an' Longstreth have always been after me."

"Laramie, what are your eyes for?" demanded Duane. "Watch out. And now here. See your friend Morton. Tell him this game grows hot. Together you approach four or five mey you know well and can absolutely trust. I may need your help.'

Then Dunne went from place to place, corner to corner, bar to bar, watching, listening, recording. The excitement had preceded him, and speculation was rife. He thought best to keep out of it. After dark he stole up to Longstreth's ranch. The evening was warm; the doors were open; and in the twilight the only lamps that had been lit were in Longstreth's big sitting-room, at the far end of the house. When a buckboard drove up and Longstreth and Lawson alighted, Duane was well hidden in the bushes, so well screened that he could get but a fleeting glimpse of Longstreth as he went in. For all Duane could see, he appeared to be a calm and quiet man, intense beneath the surface, with an air of dignity under insult. Duane's chance to observe Lawson was lost. They went into the house without speaking and closed the door.

At the other end of the porch, close under a window, was an offset between step and wall, and there in the shadow Duane hid. So Duane walted there in the darkness with patience born of many hours of hid-

Presently a lamp was lit; and Duane heard the swish of skirts. "Something's happened surely, Ruth," he heard Miss Longstreth say, anxiously. "Papa just met me in the hall and didn't speak. He seemed pale, worried."

"Cousin Floyd looked like a thunder-cloud," said Ruth. "For once he didn't try to kiss me. Something's happened."

"Oh, dear! Ruth, what can we do? These are wild men. Floyd makes life miserable for me. And he teases you unmer-"I don't call it teasing. Floyd wants

cally. "He'd run after any woman." "A fine compliment for me, Cousin Ruth," laughed Ray. "I don't care," replied Ruth, stubbornly. "It's so. He's mushy. And

to spoon," declared Ruth, emphati-

kiss me-I hate him!" There were steps on the hall floor. "Hello, girls!" sounded out Law-

when he's been drinking and tries to

son's voice, minus its usual gayety. "Floyd, what's the matter?" asked Ray, presently. "I never saw papa as he is to-night, nor you so-so worried Tell me, what has happened?"

"We had to submit to a damnable outrage," replied Lawson, passionately, as if the sound of his voice augmented his feeling. "Listen, girls; I'll tell you about it." He coughed, cleared his throat in a way that betrayed he had been drinking.

Duane sank deeper into the shadov of his covert, and, stiffening his muscles for a protracted spell of rigidity, prepared to listen with all acuteness and intensity. Just one word from this Lawson, inadvertently uttered in a moment of passion, might be the word Duane needed for his

"It happened at the town hall," began Lawson, rapidly. "Your father and Judge Owens and I were there in consultation with three ranchers from out of town. Then that damned ranger stalked in dragging Snecker, the fellow who hid here in the house. He had arrested Snecker for alleged assault on a restaurant-keeper named Laramie. Sneeker being obviously innocent, he was discharged. Then this ranger began shouting insults. Law was a farce in Fairdale. The court was a farce. There was no law. Your father was afraid of the rustlers, highwaymen, murderers. He was afraid or-he just let them alone. He used his office to cheat ranchers and cattlemen in lawsuits. All this the ranger yelled for everyone to hear, A damnable outrage. Your father, Ray, insulted in his own court by a

rowdy ranger!" "Oh!" cried Ray Longstreth, in mingled distress and anger.

"The ranger service wants to rule western Texas," went on Lawson. "These rangers are all a low set. This is one of the worst of the lot. He's to be feared. He would kill. If your father had made the least move he would have shot him. He's a cold-nerved devil-the born gunman. My God, any instant I expected to see your father fall dead at my feet !" "Oh, Floyd! The unspeakable rufflan!" cried Ray Longstreth, pas-

"What do you care for the insinuations of such a man?" said Ray Longstreth, her voice now deep and rich with feeling. "After a moment's thought no one will be influenced by papa not to worry. Surely after all these years he can't be injured in

reputation by-by an adventurer." "Yes, he can be injured," replied Floyd, quickly. "The frontier is a queer place. There are many bitter men here-men who have failed at ranching. And your father has been wonderfully successful. The ranger

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Chance for an Invention. There are dolls which say "Mamma" and "Papa." Why doesn't someone invent a golf ball that will say 'Here I